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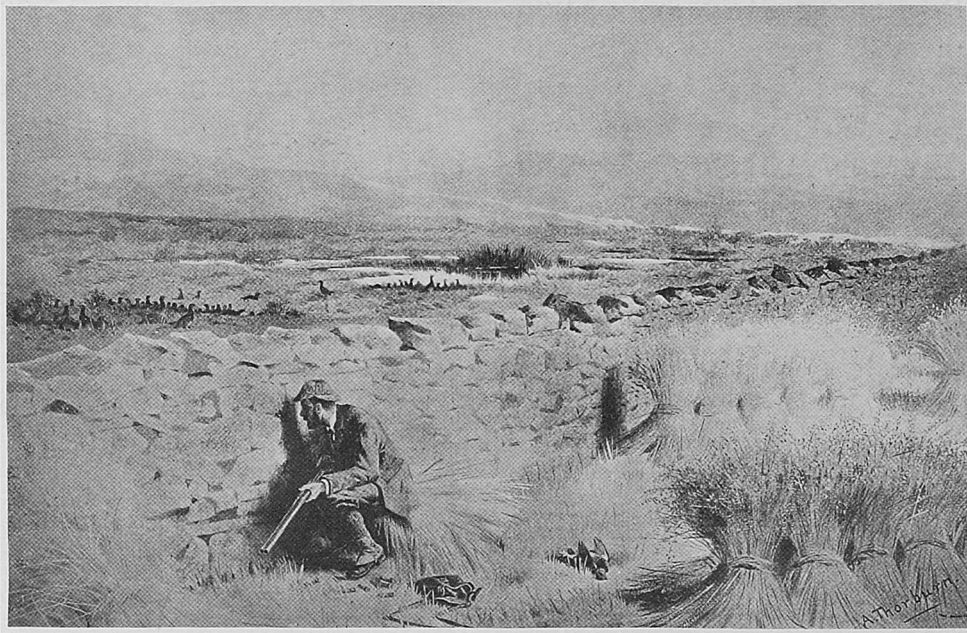
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FROM A GROUSE SHOOTER'S JOURNAL



BEFORE the introduction of the fowling piece, grouse were unquestionably well-known in England and Scotland. Yet the manner in which they were pursued does not appear. Doubtless the hawk was employed for the purpose, though it would require a swift flight to overtake an old moorcock going with the wind in his tail.

This surmise—that hawks might have been used for bringing down grouse, and still pursue them—was verified by a sportsman who, having ascended an abrupt hill, which forms the northern boundary of Bollyhope fells, had his attention attracted by a brown hawk and a smaller bird in the valley below, the former endeavoring to seize the latter. The smaller bird did not attempt to make its escape by

direct flight, being doubtless aware that it could not accomplish this. Instead, it remained, as it were, stationary in the air, a few yards away from its mortal enemy, dexterously eluding his stroke several times, on which occasions the birds changed places. The hawk surely would ultimately have effected his purpose, but being anxious to save the life of the little terrified creature, the gunner flashed off some powder, hastily put in his gun for the purpose. This frightened off the hawk and the small bird at once hid itself amongst the heather.

However, either from the report of the explosion of the powder or some other cause, a large moorcock got on the wing, to which the hawk immediately gave chase. The atmosphere,

though not remarkably clear, was in that state which enables a person to trace flying objects for a considerable distance. The moor-cock went way down the wind, and for some few seconds the flight of the pursued and the pursuer, in regard to speed, seemed precisely on a par. At length, however, the distance between the two became greater, the moor-cock drawing out in advance and continuing to increase his lead till the hawk fairly gave up the pursuit, and his intended victim flew completely away. The hobby—a small falcon with very long wings—as well as the moor-buzzard, are frequently seen on the moorlands of Durham and the north of England, where, indeed, both these birds breed. The brown hawk in question was larger than the hobby, but considerably less than the buzzard, and on the score of speed in its flight, might perhaps be placed equally between them. The flight of the hobby is equal in celerity to that of the sparrow-hawk; the moor-buzzard, like the wood-buzzard and the kite, flies slowly. A good hawk, in hawking days, might well have been employed in the pursuit and successfully, save when the wind favored.

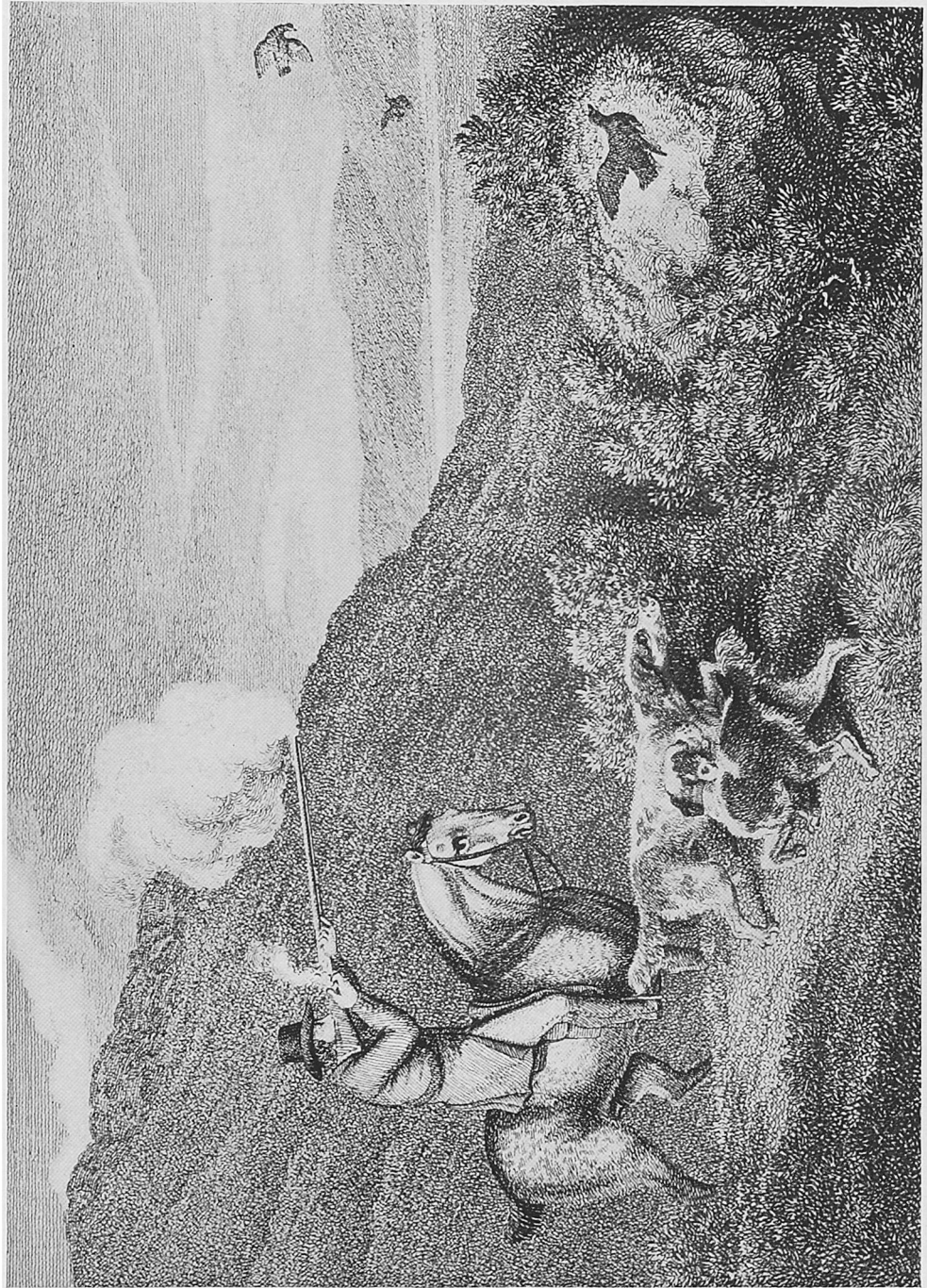
It was pointed out in the article, "Bird-Dogs in Action," in the April Lotus, that driving grouse and shooting them from butts often is due to the host's habit of inviting more guns than he can provide dogs for. On the other hand there are estates where the drive is not practised and dogs are used.

Like partridges, moor-game becomes stationary at noon, and will not run again till about half-past four o'clock, particularly if the day happen to be very warm; and during this quiescent

period the dogs cannot hunt, nor is it possible, therefore, to obtain satisfactory diversion. As the evening draws on, the birds get on the foot and good sport can be had. In fact, from about half-past four or five o'clock till dusk is the best shooting time that can be selected. Aware, from long experience of these circumstances, or of the habits of game, a veteran, after his morning's sport, will not recommence ranging till nearly five o'clock, then obtaining something more, perhaps, than average diversion, leaving moor or mountain with many a brace of grouse.

In the days before shooting grouse from butts was as common as it is now, the moors of Durham afforded employment for a great number of lead-miners, who were mostly poachers, and made havoc amongst the game, in defiance of the utmost vigilance of the watchers. Indeed, the moors throughout the north of England were infested with lead-mining poachers. "These fellows," says a writer of those days, "commence operations several days or a week before August 12 (or, in their own language, 'a week before the gentlemen') for the purpose of supplying the various markets in good time." Yet a poacher was always this same writer's guide on the Durham moors, recommended too by the Bishop's keeper. For it was deemed advisable, because of the desperate character of these men, to wink at their depredations. In fact, the Bishop of Durham, by the advice of his steward, even went so far in propitiating them as to appropriate a considerable length of mountains for their exclusive amusement; which constrained indulgence, though it might render them less openly au-

GROUSE SHOOTING IN THE EARLY XIXTH CENTURY



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IN their book on "Grouse and Grouse Moors," Malcolm and Maxwell state that in the days of muzzle-loaders the pointer and the setter were the inevitable accompaniment of a day's shooting. The close-cut stubbles and trimmed hedgerows of more modern times led to their disuse on the partridge manors of the south; while the adoption of driving, enforced by the increasing wildness of the grouse in the northern counties of England, still further limited the area in which they may still profitably be employed.

Now the time-honoured sport of shooting over dogs can only be enjoyed in the Highlands of Scotland, and even there the spread of driving has banished the older method of shooting from many moors. Yet there is little cause for fear that this charming form of shooting will fall entirely into disuse. In Cathness, Sutherland, on the Western Islands and adjacent mainland, grouse lie so close all the year round that driving is quite out of the question; while, by prolonging sport for a month on end, instead of compressing the shooting into a few days, this system will never want followers among those who come to pass away their autumn holiday.

The dogs naturally play an important part in the proceeding, and it is most necessary that they should be well broken and fit for work. Setters range rather wider than pointers, and are consequently the best to use where birds are not plentiful. Setters are also better in rank heather and on rough ground, being less tender-footed than pointers. The setter is without doubt, the hardier dog of the two, though the pointer is easier to breed and to break.

dacious in other parts of his lordship's moorland property, did not entirely restrain them to the selected allotment. Yet, however culpable as poachers, hunters almost invariably found them excellent guides, and frequently were astonished at their intimate knowledge of the bewildering intricacies of the mountains. Even when enveloped in a dense fog or murky rain, they were never at a loss for the intended direction, though perhaps half a dozen yards in advance, the humid atmosphere appeared completely impervious. Here, in fact, is a typical description of a day with one of these poacher-guides.

The heath, beautiful with purple flowers, was so thickly loaded with pearly drops that every move seemed like stepping in water half-way up the leg. A sort of misty rain fell lightly to the ground and rendered the distant view impossible. The hunter continued to advance on the moor. One of his pointers set, when an old hen grouse rose with two cheapers (young birds just able to get on the wing and called cheapers from the plaintive note which they emit.) The old hen the hunter brought to pack. The cheapers he left to shift for themselves. Having reached a considerable distance amongst the mountains, the game scarce, and the few birds flying wildly away, the rain increased, the surrounding hills smoked with it from top to bottom, it fell faster. Hunter, as well as guide and attendant, were soaked through and through.

Shelter was unobtainable. It is true, they placed themselves on the windward side of one of the loosely built stone walls which are sometimes met with on the moors and from which

possibly the method of shooting from butts originated. The rain, however, was blown through the numerous interstices, and they were constrained to commence their way homeward. They had not proceeded more than half a mile, when the rain turned into a mist, so thick that it was not possible to discern an object a few yards in advance. Without a guide the hunter must have wandered unavailingly amongst the hills; but his poacher unhesitatingly led the way as accurately as a line-hunting hound would follow on the scent; and he reached his quarters in due time, removed his utterly drenched apparel, and good-humouredly awaited the return of more favourable weather.

One afternoon in crossing the moor of Rannock, in the direction of the King's House Inn and Glencoe, as the day was waning, the same hunter, from whose journal these facts are obtained, observed a crowd of red grouse crossing the road, and distinctly saw the old cock, conspicuous from his superior size, leading his family from one side to the other. In grouse shooting the old cock is the first to take wing. He generally rises at a considerable distance, challenges as he gets up, and endeavours to lead the brood away. If he be brought down, the hen and the young birds will not fly far, will lay well, and may be picked up one by one; and, under such circumstances, the shooting is very pretty. On approaching the spot the dogs began to draw, and the hunter was thus enticed to follow the birds, though he had had no previous intention of renewing the sport at that moment. He was lucky enough to bring down the old cock at

the first rise, one of the finest specimens of red grouse he had ever seen. As has been noted, it is from five o'clock till dusk that moor game affords better diversion than at any other part of the day; so although it must have been six o'clock before the hunter left the road, he succeeded in bagging five brace before the shades of night closed around him.

The Grampian Hills, at no great distance from Edinburgh, are described as affording plenty of mountain game early in the last century, while, on the Glasgow side, entering this rugged region by way of Loch Lomond, the sportsman immediately reached Rob Roy's country on the right and mountains equally bold and equally well stocked with game on the other side of the expansive and beautiful lake. The scenery was further enlivened by that beautiful little animal, the roe, the smallest, but perhaps the most interesting, of the deer tribe found in the United Kingdom. There too the huntsman was apt to be saluted by the harshly-screaming notes of the golden eagle who, sailing aloft (frequently at an amazing height) in endless gyrations, seemed forever on the wing. The Duke of Montrose and Sir James Colquhoun were extensive proprietors in those parts, Sir James noted for being very rigorous in the preservation of the game. Some of the finest blackcocks which ever rose, were bagged at the base of the magnificent cloud-capt Ben Lomond; and indeed black and red grouse were plentiful in the neighborhood of all the lakes in the Southern Highlands.

In the picture accompanying this article, the old time grouse-shooter is

seen on horseback and shooting at the birds from his mount, which would be a rare sight nowadays, when birds are driven. When grouse were taken in nets, the proprietor of the terrain took the field in good style, being accompanied by a servant to hold his horse when he dismounted, and two mounted keepers in their green plush jackets and gold laced hats. One old gentleman, remembered in the sporting news of the day, had a leash of highly bred red and white setters. These were let loose one at a time, and beautifully did they range the fields, quartering the ground in obedience to the voice of the whistle. On the game being found, every dog was down on his belly, close to the ground; and the net being unfurled, the keepers advanced at a gentle trot, at a certain distance from each other, and drew it over them and the covey at the same time. Choice was then made of the finest birds, which were carried home alive, and kept in a room until wanted, and occasionally all would be let fly again, on ascertaining their unfitness for the sport. Modern sportsmen may consider this tame sport, and so in fact it is, compared with the excitement attending the gun; but still it had its advantages. It was the means of preserving game on an estate, by equalizing the number of cock and hen birds, at least to a certain extent; and killing the old ones, no birds were destroyed but what were fit for eating; and such as were destroyed were put to death at once without the chance of lingering from the effects of a wound, which is a circumstance inseparable from shooting.